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REMARKS OF SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD (D., MONTANA)
at a
TESTIMONIAL DINNER IN HONOR OF SENATOR GEORGE D. AIKEN
SAINT MICHAEL'S COLLEGE, WINOOSKI, VERMONT
Saturday, May 1, 1971

I am delighted to have an opportunity to come to Vermont for this tribute to George Aiken. Your most distinguished Senator also happens to be my oldest friend in the Senate. My regard for him is such that I would be delighted to sing his praises--even from the top of your highest mountain. Perhaps, I should say, especially from that mountain, since I have the honor to share its name.

It is one of the marks of the civility of the Senate that a close personal association such as I have with Senator Aiken bridges the gap of party politics. I would note in this connection that we share breakfast almost daily in the Senate cafeteria. It is served at an early hour and in the morning

the problems of the nation have always seemed to stand in clearest perspective. At least the breadth of vision of George Aiken makes them so appear. Having been exposed to his judgments for many years, I can understand the basis of his reputation for sharp perception. In the aviary of the Senate, George Aiken is catalogued as neither hawk nor dove but as a very wise owl.

Rather than heap redundant praise on his shoulders, however, I would like to share with you instead a few thoughts on the impact which I believe George Aiken's presence in the Senate has had on the face of this State, the nation and the world.

When I see Senator Aiken in these delightful surroundings and among old friends, I find it difficult to understand why he ever left home. It is much easier to understand why he comes back so often; he is of the very rock and earth of Vermont.

I know that he could have remained and settled down as a successful raspberry farmer.

He could have remained and continued his work in the field of horticulture and his highly original investigations of wild flowers.

He could have stayed here as a local school director and state legislator.

He was equipped to follow any and all of those occupations. Any one of them, alone, would have been more than sufficient distinction for a lifetime. In short, he could have remained in Putney and put together what would have been a very appealing and most comfortable life.

But George Aiken, to borrow the phrase of another Vermonter, "took a road less travelled." He left his heart here as he followed a family tradition of high public service. When he moved into the arena of State and federal responsibility,

however, he continued to resist the comfortable security of the moment. His native honesty led him to reject the easy and the expedient. Rather, he chose to immerse himself, progressively, in more complex aspects of public leadership and, just as one achievement in Vermont led to another, each political summit in Washington has expanded his vision to new horizons.

He chose, for example, not co-existence with vested interests, but struggle against monopolistic practices in the supply of electric power.

Rather than a narrow partisanship, he urged on his party a positive and constructive outlook. He did so at a time when it would have been easier to go along with a blatant partisanship. It is small wonder that Democrats in this State ever since, have been hard-pressed to find a candidate to run against him. In his last election, I understand, the challenge to him was such that he was compelled to expend on his campaign the grand total of \$17.09.

George Aiken has never pursued change for the sake of change. Neither has he been wedded to the traditional way of doing things out of a sterile traditionalism. Rather, his common sense has always been receptive to new ideas. Change does not come easily in government, but over the years, the advocacies which George Aiken fought for have borne fruit.

A notable case in point is the extension of electrical power service to the rural areas of the nation. In 1938, Governor Aiken was able to tell the people of Vermont that within two years electric power would be available to every community in the State. His prophecy has long since come true and as the years have passed, electricity has emerged as a key factor in the revolution in agriculture. Its impact has been especially notable on the dairy industry.

Bulk tanks, milking parlors and bar cleaners have replaced milk cans, milking stools and, regrettably, milkmaids.

What has been lost in color, however, has been compensated for by the gain in efficiency. Machines powered by electricity have removed much of the drudgery from the farmer's job.

I was struck by recent figures from the Department of Agriculture in this connection. They showed that the average number of man-hours needed to tend a dairy cow has been cut in half over the last 30 years, while the production per cow has doubled in that same period. So thanks to George Aiken and his counterparts in other parts of the ^{nation}, Vermont dairy farmers along with those in Wisconsin, Minnesota and elsewhere are producing twice as much milk per cow on half as much work-input.

George Aiken has also been in the forefront of the revolution in transportation. Since the 1930's rural road mileage in Vermont has increased seven fold. Like electrification, this advance has brought with it results which could hardly have been foreseen when it began. The highways have opened up most of Vermont's delightful countryside for recreation

in winter as well as summer. From elsewhere in the nation, Americans have been travelling here in ever increasing numbers to confirm for themselves that Vermont does, indeed, look like the landscapes painted by your/^{late}near neighbor Grandma Moses. It is no wonder that tourism has become such a vital part of the State's income.

Then there is the Aiken Rural Water Act of 1965. It provides small communities throughout the nation with federal assistance in developing water and sewage facilities. It is bringing great benefits to this State and to many others, notably my own State of Montana. This landmark legislation passed the Senate by a unanimous vote in spite of the opposition of then President Lyndon B. Johnson. That tells you something of George Aiken's stature among his colleagues of both parties.

In recounting these achievements, I do not mean to leave the impression that Senator Aiken brought them about single-handedly. He would be the first to reject the label

"super-man or super-Senator." There are none and never have been in the Senate. Achievements are put together in that body out of a common response to a common need and many members participate in their creation. But someone has to set the train in motion. With regard to rural America, George Aiken's vision of the future, as seen from Vermont, has been a compelling inspiration. The great esteem with which he is held, moreover, has been a powerful force in giving substance to this vision. In my book and in many others, his support of a policy gives it automatic respectability. The fact is that his stamp of approval is a sort of national trademark for reliability.

George Aiken has done much in thirty years of Senate service to enhance the well-being, not only of those Americans who live the quiet life of farm and hillside but of all the people of the nation. His good sense has stood as a wall against assaults on the integrity of our national life. He has labored incessantly to keep in check the violently divisive

forces which tear at the fabric of the nation's unity. At the same time, he has worked to turn back the tides of bigotry which would erode the nation's meaning.

He is the epitome of the New England of Henry Thoreau. Yet, his decency and good sense are just as relevant to the entire nation--not only to well-kept village and hamlet but to eroded farmlands and wasted rivers, to run-down factory towns and to metropolitan areas in shambles. This nation is in great need of human healing and George Aiken is one of its finest doctors.

As time goes on, moreover, more attention, is also being paid to his views on world affairs and peace. In that realm, he has not pursued the course of self-righteous isolationism--to use his own phrase. Rather, he has emerged in recent years as one of the most knowledgeable men in the Senate on international affairs. If the word statesman is applicable to anyone in the Senate, it applies to George Aiken. I have

travelled with him to all corners of the globe. His judgments of situations abroad have been, as they are at home--sound and clear--even in the most alien circumstances.

In underdeveloped nations of Southeast Asia which we visited together, for example, Senator Aiken's background as a farmer gave him profound insights into the problems of those overwhelmingly rural lands. He saw clearly the incongruities of much which was being foisted upon them by us and others in the name of progress. Asians responded to him, not only as an American but as a human being, one of them, a man whose hands, too, had touched the soil. In Cambodia, as in Laos, in Vietnam as in Burma, he left more friends than he found. George Aiken personified to them as he does to anyone who knows him the rejection of a philosophy that would presume to save a village by burning it down.

Above all else, George Aiken has been during these past few years, a voice pleading against deepening the tragedy

in Indochina. At the very beginning--and I am going back to 1965--he raised a flag of warning against the path we had entered on in Viet Nam. Time and again, ever since, he has urged a rational peace. Three years ago, he said that it was time for this country to conclude that the war was over and to declare that it had been won insofar as it could be won by our participation. He urged that the withdrawal of our forces begin without delay.

We have tarried too long. We ^{have} permitted the tragedy to spread too far from Viet Nam--into Cambodia and Laos. It has now rebounded to sow the seeds of a deepening division in this nation.

The approaches to Viet Nam which George Aiken urged long ago have taken too long to find their way into the policies of the government. Thousands more have died or been maimed during the delay.

One would hope that his most recent proposal will not go unheeded. He has called for a convening of Asian nations to find a solution to the problem of peace in Asia. That is a most reasonable suggestion. In the end, those nations will have the greatest stake in the kind of peace which is restored. It may be that the President's new and welcome initiatives towards China are a step in that direction. In any event, when peace does return to Asia, it will come sooner rather than later, because George Aiken has spoken out on the basis of his insights into the problems of that region.

We might well inquire into the source of these insights. Why is it that George Aiken sees clearly into so many situations whether they are on the banks of the Mekong or Memphremagog. The secret was revealed many years ago by someone who said:

"Youth is not radical; only embittered and frustrated youth (or any age for that matter) wants to overturn a social order that will give them no foothold or security. Nor is youth apt to be stand-pat. Given reasonable opportunity, youth is liberal and open-minded. That is why folks can be young at twenty-one or forty-five or eighty, for youth is a mental outlook. Everything is before them and they have a vast energy for doing..."

Today, the author of these lines is the senior Senator from Vermont. He is second ranking Member of the United States Senate in point of service. He is the Dean of the Republicans of the Senate. Except for the vagaries of politics he would be the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and third in succession to the Presidency. He would also be chairman of either the Foreign Relations Committee or the Committee on Agriculture.

The years have not dimmed the youthfulness of George Aiken's vision. They have not slowed the vigor of his step. In outlook, George Aiken remains more in tune with what the TV commercials refer to as the "now" generation than those who write them.

Because of our long-standing relationship, it has become something of a joke in the Senate to say that when Mike Mansfield speaks, you know what George Aiken is thinking and vice versa. It seems to me that this reciprocity might be given a more enduring form. I noted earlier in my remarks that the highest peak in the Green Mountain State bears the name Mansfield. It occurred to me that a suitable promontory in Montana might similarly be credited to the Senator from Vermont.

I am happy to be able to report that the reciprocity, in a sense, already exists. The highest point in Montana is called Granite Peak, and in the United States Senate the word "granite" is synonymous with "Aiken." The two words are associated with amazing regularity by colleagues and journalists alike. Only two weeks ago I had occasion to remind the Senate that granite typifies the character and stature of the man. So I hope that Senator Aiken will accept my assurance that the highest

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mountain in Montana is really named after him. And I might just add that Granite or Aiken Peak, Montana, is three times as high as Mount Mansfield, Vermont which, I am happy to concede, is just the way it is with their respective namesakes.